



ACQUISITION,
TECHNOLOGY
AND LOGISTICS

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

22 MAY 2003

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Markey:

Thank you for your recent letter to President George W. Bush urging him "not to resume nuclear weapons testing." I am responding to your letter on his behalf.

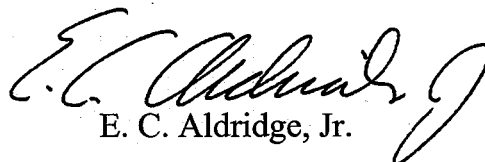
The President's policy on nuclear testing is clear. The Administration continues to support a unilateral moratorium on underground nuclear testing. However, the Administration continues to oppose the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and will not seek its ratification.

The Defense Department is not currently seeking a return to testing, nor has the Department of Energy (DOE) Stockpile Stewardship Program revealed a safety or reliability issue in the stockpile that would require underground nuclear weapon testing to resolve. In my October 21, 2002, letter to the Nuclear Weapons Council that you cite, I did not advocate a return to testing but cited the risk to safety and reliability without testing, and asked if restricted, low yield testing could reduce that risk.

In the event, at some future date, the President determines a need to resume testing, we must ensure we are capable of doing so in a timely fashion. Indeed, Congress recognized this readiness requirement when, in section 3142 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, it directed DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration to prepare alternative plans for achieving various levels of test readiness. The Defense Department is supporting this initiative.

A similar letter has been sent to all the signatories of your letter.

Sincerely,


E. C. Aldridge, Jr.

